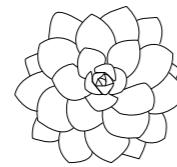


Issue 01 2016  
USD \$20



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Issue 1

Suculenta

Autumn/Winter 2016

# Suculenta

Issue 1

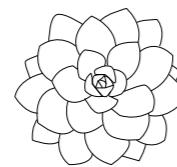
The quarterly magazine of  
design in relation to nature.



Issue 03 2017  
USD \$20



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Issue III

Suculenta

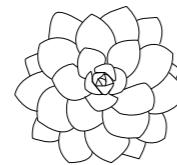
Autumn/Winter 2017



Issue 02 2017  
USD \$20



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Issue II

Suculenta

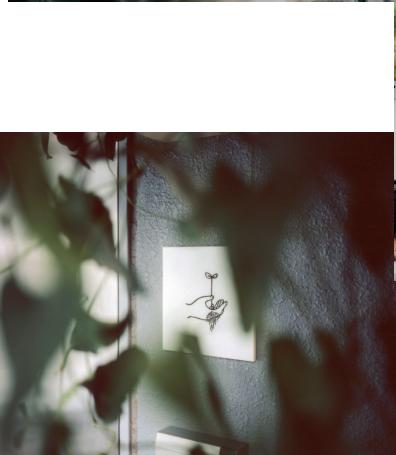
Summer/Spring 2017

# Suculenta

Issue II

The quarterly magazine of  
design in relation to nature.





## Editor's letter

When putting together Succulent there is a pleasure, but arduous, task and editing down all the stories that we have published. What is very apparent during this process is the international scope of our coverage: we never know where the next great idea is going to emerge from.

In this issue we have features conceived by the FreudenvonFreuden web that have seen collaborations with contributors from around the world. Whether it's a photographer shooting the importance of water or an florist creating powerful art with plants, it's inspiring to know that there is passion to keep telling stories about design in relation to nature.

This issue is released at a time when mainstream news outlets are delivering confusing, contradictory and often troubling stories that paint an uncertain future of so many things that we hold dear, and quite possibly, take for granted, as is the nature.

It's against this backdrop that we have put together Suculenta - a magazine that celebrates great work and ideas about nature. This context heightens the importance of creativity. Suculenta would be nothing without the people who have a desire to create and will see ideas through nature. The network of people we speak to, work with and write about become more vibrant and vital by the day.

The work on the following pages might provide a moment of escape, an inspiration, a pause for reflection or simply smile. We hope you enjoy it.

# Suculenta

Barcelona

Directora  
Mar Senén.  
[marsenen@suculenta.es](mailto:marsenen@suculenta.es)

Suculenta digital  
Ana Centelles.  
[cente@suculenta.es](mailto:cente@suculenta.es)

Subdirectora  
Claudia Peñin.

Impresión  
Gilabert-200BIS.

Dirección de arte  
Mar Senén.  
[marsenen@suculenta.es](mailto:marsenen@suculenta.es)



The plants complement us and help us in our day.  
Get a good indoor or outdoor garden and enjoy the aesthetic advantages and wonderful therapeutic benefits.

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# Huy Bui

Architect, Designer & Artist, Apartment & Studio,  
Brooklyn, New York City



Photography: Emily Johnston  
Interview & Text: Shoko Wanger

Huy Bui speaks about his plants the way some people speak about their children. His eyes widen. He smiles. He tells stories with the energy and awe of someone who's been witness to the beginnings of life and all the magic of notable "firsts": first blooms, first blossoms, first signs of growth.

To those familiar with Huy's path as an architect, designer, and creative thinker, this makes sense. Fascinated with nature and the adaptability of plant life, the former banker has spent the better portion of the past three years tending to a project he calls Plant-in City, which marries smart design, technological innovation, and a deep appreciation for the natural world. Centered on stackable wooden structures made to sustain plant life in urban settings, Plant-in City installations serve as a reminder that science and art can coexist beautifully — and are connected in ways that transcend aesthetics.



"*Plant-in City* installations serve as a reminder that science and art can coexist beautifully"

**Tell us about your background in architecture. You weren't always following a creative path — how did you get your start?**

I went to school for finance and worked in real estate banking for six years afterward. At that point, I was really feeling like my career had run its course, and I was ready to move on. The people I was working with were spending lots of money to live a certain kind of life, and I thought, I can't do this. I can't get used to this. It didn't feel right. So I saved some money and went back to school for architecture at Parsons here in New York. I didn't know exactly what I was getting into at the time, but I needed an out.

**How did your friends and family react at the time?**

They were supportive and pleasantly surprised. My father had a banking company, and had wishes for me to take over. But I had realized there was so much more to life than being a part of a system that was so limited and ultimately didn't make any sense to me.

By the time I graduated in 2007, the economy was failing. My father lost his business, and the whole financial system collapsed in 2008. Meanwhile, I had this new set of skills, and I wondered if maybe I had seen all this coming from afar.

At the time, my brother was working in banking, too, and was also experiencing a change of heart. He decided he wanted to open a restaurant. I was working at a design firm then, drafting and drawing all day, and I said, "I barely know what I'm doing — but I can help you." So I quit my job and did that.



**Standing outside his studio, shivering in the biting cold of a January afternoon, he beams. "What a great day," he says. "And what a life."**



**Tell us how Plant-in City — which you've said "takes terrariums to the 21st century" — came about.**

**What's your history with horticulture?**

To be honest, there is no history. I knew nothing about plant life when I started. But I knew I wanted more of it in my day-to-day. I grew up in a beautiful suburb in Northern Virginia, so as a kid, I was always out in the woods, biking, running around. I was a wild child. As an adult living in the city, I realized I wanted to continue to be around nature as much as possible. Working 50 hours per week in the shop — especially during winter — was starting to feel suffocating. I began to think about ways to feel more balanced, and plants were a part of that.

**How do you describe the concept behind Plant-in City to those who have never seen it? Does the project have an elevator pitch?**

I've lost sleep over that question. In the end, the elevator pitch is this: Plant-in City is architecture for sustaining plant life. Living in a city like New York, you're always going to be dealing with space constraints. Apartments are stacked to save space, so I thought, why can't we stack plants? We have to go vertical. That's the baseline idea.

The idea for Plant-in City came about in October 2011, and my partners and I launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds the following June. Jon Schramm and I had been working together at HB Collaborative, building custom furniture — we did all the design and the construction of the structures, and the planting, too. Carlos Gomez de Llarena's focus was more with computers and user interface, and he came up with a proof of concept to water the plants by iPhone.

What's surprised you most about working with plants thus far? After dealing primarily in wood and metal, it must have been quite an adjustment, working with a living thing.

I've learned so much. Plants are very resilient. They're responsive. They need care and attention, just like anything else. I even find myself talking to my plants when I'm alone.

I've also found that plant life is very mysterious, very unpredictable. In my shop, I have a full-spectrum LED light and all the plants below it are leaning in its direction. That was such a cool thing for me to see. What's more, it reminded me of one of the things I love best about Plant-in City: that I get to explore new technologies and find interesting ways of working with them. That LED light came onto the market, and it was such a breakthrough — suddenly I could grow plants in a place like my studio, which has very little natural light, without driving up my electricity bill. It was such a major innovation that the scientists who invented it won the Nobel Prize for physics. That I can use that technology for Plant-in City is a very exciting thing.

**Do you have a favorite material — or plant — to work with?**

I love walnut. It's a very common tree in the Northeast, and it's beautiful. As for plants, my favorite has to be the asparagus fern. They look very delicate, but they're extremely hardy. They're like tiny trees. When their leaves catch water, it lingers so that it creates a sort of translucent skin.

I'm also fascinated by air plants — they're very spider-like. And because they don't need soil, they can be suspended in space. That was the inspiration for the wire architecture used in Plant-in City, which has been very popular.

**Tell us more about the Kickstarter campaign for Plant-in City in 2012. What are your thoughts on crowdfunding, and how do you think platforms like this have changed the way artists connect with their audience?**

Launching our Kickstarter campaign was a very exciting experience. It was unlike anything I've ever done. I highly recommend it. It's very challenging, rewarding, and very grassroots, and it really forces you to be thoughtful about your idea. It makes you think, what's the best way to tell our story?

As for crowdfunding, you're sourcing from family and friends and total strangers, but you're sourcing PR, too — TreeHugger wrote about us, and Wired, and Fast Company, too. Also, we thrive off of deadlines, and with Kickstarter, you have only a certain amount of time to raise money. During the campaign we had a diverse experience of introducing our project online and offline to our audience. We hosted a couple of events and posted shamelessly on Facebook. In the end, we got so much out of it, a captive audience, excellent press and some funds to make the Plant-In City Art Installation at the Mark Miller Gallery a reality.



*Huy, thanks for chatting about the importance of greens in confined spaces and how we can incorporate plants in our urban environments.*

**Huy has created a special edition of his delicate Plant-in City Air Terrariums for Freunde von Freunden.**

**Get acquainted with more creative and innovative minds in New York through our past interviews.**



# Manuela Sosa

Florist, House & Studio, Vallvidrera, Barcelona.

Photography: Silvia Conde  
Interview & Text: Silvia Conde & Rachael Vance

**Manuela Sosa** is a florist. Originally from South America, she's settled in the pastoral hills of Vallvidrera, just outside Barcelona. Her home reflects the hues and textures of the surrounding landscape. Together with her husband, they're renovating and expanding at a leisurely pace. They like see it as a work in progress, believing that the house adapts to them and not the other way around.

Each morning Manuela takes a few steps to her flower studio, 'Gang and the Wool', just outside on the garden terrace. Well-known because of its idyllic little greenhouse – Vogue Spain once dubbed it one of the most beautiful flower-shops in the world – the blithe space is synonymous with her floristry. The space is cozy, an inviting vintage couch with throw blankets welcomes repose, books and pottery line the bookshelves and the greenhouse itself has doors that open wide onto the brickwork terrace.



**What is 'Gang and the Wool'?**

'Gang and the Wool' is a flower studio born out of my desire to create an experience. It began in 2010 when I prepared the flowers for a friend's wedding, this led to the decision to undertake my own business. Since then, it's been a step by step process. As a designer, I try to absorb everything around me, anything that affects me, I digest it and transform it into something completely different. In the studio we work with natural elements: flowers, seeds, branches, plants. The idea of working with different concepts is fascinating. In this form I have the chance to fuse different typologies and disciplines.

**What does the name 'Gang and the Wool' refer to?**

'Gang and the Wool' is a name that came about when I was working together with two other people in furniture design. It was not overly thoughtful or meant to mean anything specific, although the play on words and the references we came up with somehow worked for us.

**Where does your love of nature come from?**

I grew up in a very natural environment. My father is a farmer in Uruguay and as a child I remember spending whole seasons in the countryside. But my passion for flowers was inherited from my mother. We spent hours in the garden and on the weekends we used to wander through the fields. She would teach me the names of flowers and how to dry and press them inside books. She also taught me how to observe them – their leaves, stems, colors and textures.

I adore nature in all its expressions – the mountains, the sea, the forest, the rain, the sun, the snow, the animals... The truth is that nature provides everything for my work and personal life. Living in the hills, in nature, 20 minutes from the center of Barcelona, yet

being able to wake up at 9am to prepare coffee and an orange juice that I can drink on my terrace while I check my emails and listen to the birds is something that I wouldn't give up for anything.

**What has your most fulfilling project been?**

I like to think that all of them have been gratifying. Collectively each of my professional projects have allowed me to grow and I am what I am because of them.

**How would you describe your design style?  
What or who are your style influences?**

My style is natural. It is not based on shaping a personal signature, but rather, derived from the love we have for our work. There are many different artists that continue to influence me, such as David Nash, Alan Sonfist and Ursula von Rydingsvard.

**Do you see the differences between flowers that are mass grown, and those grown in the wild?**

The difference between mass grown flowers is the ridiculous quest for perfection; a perfection beyond what mother nature can produce. Nothing around us is free of imperfections.

**How do you see the unhurried construction of your home?**

I'm fascinated by the idea of building my own foundations slowly, it probably has something to do with the architecture degree I studied when I was in Uruguay. I understand my home as a big project that adapts exactly to my versatile needs.

**And the greenhouse?**

I've always felt a passion for these crystal greenhouses. They are like parallel worlds inside a garden. They are volatile and flexible, and full of transparencies, flowers and plants.

**Why did you stop studying architecture?**

When I arrived in Barcelona, I was 21 years old. I started the process of getting my three year architecture degree recognized within Fine Arts studies. I was then able to start at the Fine Arts faculty here. But it had nothing to do with what I had studied in Montevideo. In Uruguay the groups were smaller, the discourse with the teachers was closer and the timetables were open. I decided to start something new on my own where I could mix my two passions: Industrial Design – coming from my architecture studies – and Fine Arts.

**What made you come to Europe and specifically Barcelona?**

Curiosity. I wanted to get to know Europe. I began in Barcelona. I arrived at Plaça Catalunya with only a backpack on my shoulders. I got to know many people at that time who are nowadays great friends.

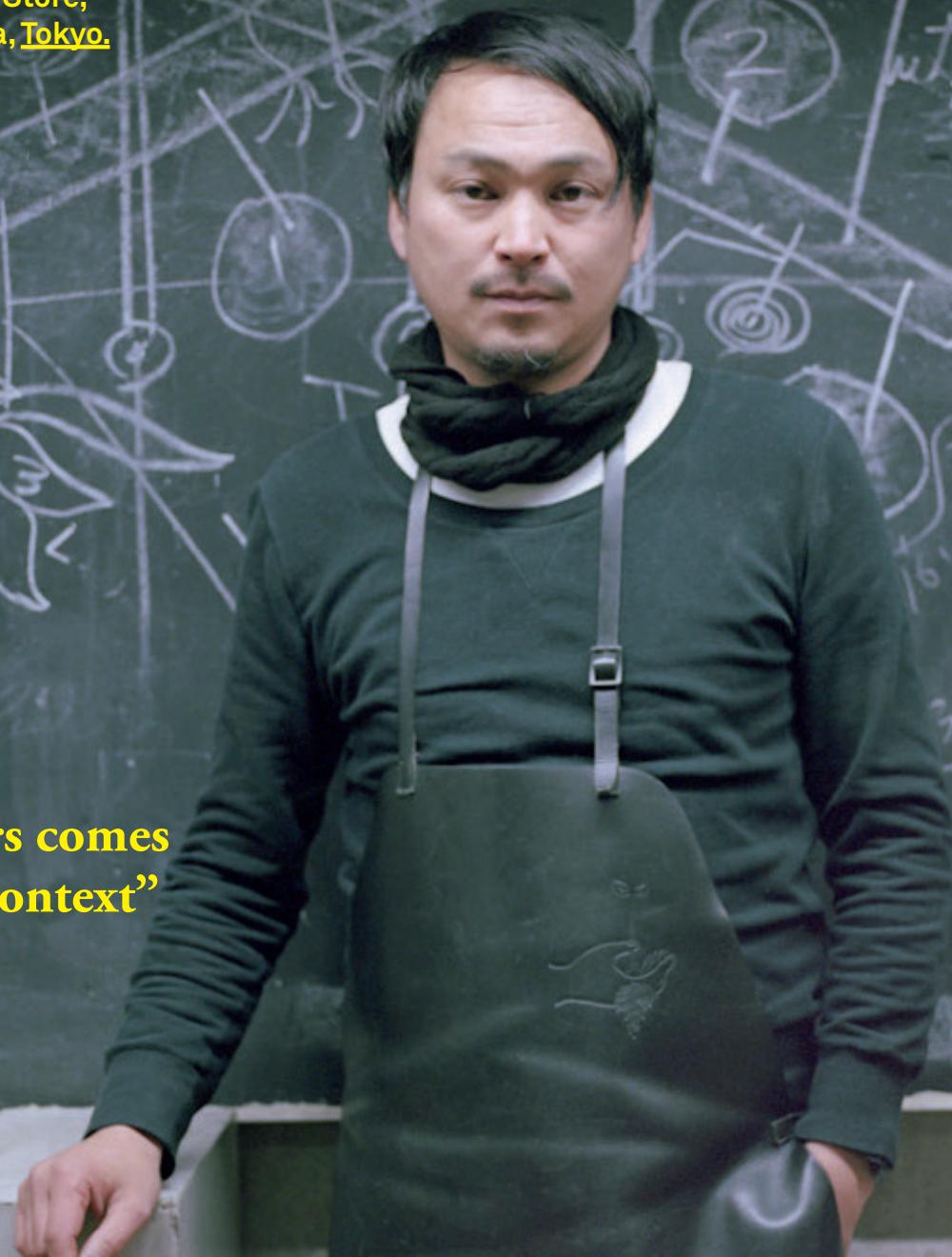




# Azuma Makoto

Flower Artist, Store,  
Minami Aoyama, Tokyo.

**“The beauty of flowers comes  
with changing the context”**



Photography: Gui Martinez  
Interview: Antonia Märzhäuser  
Translation: Saka Matsushita

**For the most part it is a daunting task to summarize a city by a single characteristic. In the case of Tokyo however, there is one trait that permeates everything: density. Tokyo's charm lies in its ability to create space where there is no space. It is a playful attitude towards an environment that is ruled by concrete. Once you turn away from the big intersections, you will find yourself in a maze of little streets, tiny shops and residential houses. Minami Aoyama is one of these sacred areas. Not far from Omotesando Dori with its juxtaposition of architectural masterpieces, you will find a place dedicated to the pure beauty of nature: JARDINS des FLEURS. This is the studio of flower artist Azuma Makoto. While the name may evoke romantic associations with Southern France, upon entry it becomes instantly clear that Azuma-san breaks with this notion radically.**



JARDINS des FLEURS is a laboratory filled with objects that you would expect to see next to an operating table rather than a flower bouquet. But what first appears as a sterile studio slowly reveals itself as a place designed for requirements of his working material: lighting, humidity and temperature are optimized and there is music playing that is hardly noticeable to the human senses; composed for the wellbeing of the flowers.



“The beauty of flowers comes with changing the context”, he explains, referring to his apparatus-like sculptures where he augments the flower by using industrial materials and devices. And his list of clients attests to his approach. Having collaborated with only the most notable fashion brands and holding an exhibition with Dries Van Noten at the museum for Les Arts Decoratifs in Paris, he still finds time to travel to the most remote places in order to find unknown plants. We enjoyed listening to his latest travel adventures in the heart of the Amazonas while sipping tea in his little sanctuary, forgetting about the concrete jungle surrounding us for a moment.

**In the context of fine arts flower are often seen as something decorative, something traditional. Was that a perspective you had to overcome?**

As you probably know Japan has a famous tradition of flower art called Ikebana and so a lot of people think in a very conservative way about flowers. I never thought about it in this way though. It is not that I wanted to overcome this but whatever I did it just happened to overcome it.

**So you see yourself somehow relating to Ikebana as a genuine Japanese tradition?**

Since I was little I was surrounded by flowers, the flowers my mum had in the house were all very Japanese. It is not really that I think about it, it's more in my blood than it is in my head I guess. I can't say it doesn't affect me, but I never think about it in a conscious way.

**Was there a certain point when you realized that you wanted to work with flowers?**

Absolutely. I got into this job because I started to work in a flower market. For me it was just very interesting to be surrounded by all these living objects and to create something with these objects. I was playing in a rock band and I saw a lot of similarities between music and flowers, especially in regards to their temporary qualities.

Every flower is very different, even if it is all red roses. They all have individual characteristics and you create a piece of work by gathering them into one. And it's the same with music, if you play in anger, in a calm manner, play it here or play it there, the music changes even if it's the same chord. Making music is creating a piece of work by layering this process, so I guess it is very similar to flowers.



**Many artists work with a variety of materials, they go from oil to ink and so on. Can you imagine working with something else other than flowers?**

I am only interested in flowers. I'm not really interested in painting. I guess I am not interested in things that will leave something behind. Flowers are not forever, they last for a certain amount of time and that thought feeds my creativity. It's very different from, for example, catching a moment in a photograph. It is more about meeting this particular flower with this particular feeling and the fact that I meet this flower in a particular moment, that is what fascinates me and that is why I think I use flowers as my medium of choice.

**You are also doing a lot of client work. Can you give us an insight into how you would approach a client like Dries van Noten who you are collaborating with at the moment?**

Working with a client first of all means having a lot of meetings. It is a collaboration so we have to talk a lot and communicate our ideas. Of course I need to know the brand image well. The client is asking me to work with them because they believe that I am able to capture their image well. So I interpret it for myself, but there are things I cannot compromise on. That is why we have to talk a lot. Basically I only work with brands that I personally really like. We have to fit really well.

**Where do you draw your inspiration from in a concrete jungle like Tokyo?**

Tokyo seems like a concrete jungle, that's true, but at the same time this is only the center, if you drive only one hour away you can find beautiful scenery. I try to escape the city a lot. I also go

abroad a lot. For me Tokyo is really more like a work place, not a place where I find inspiration. Do you travel a lot to find flowers?

Yes I travel a lot these days so I get to discover many kinds of plants and flowers. The reason why I have my base in Tokyo is because Tokyo has the best flower market in the world. If I need a certain flower from abroad I can always ask them and I can have it here in Japan. Of course they can't bring everything so on my trip to the Amazonas I did the artwork and took pictures over there.

**Do you travel a lot to find flowers?**

Yes I travel a lot these days so I get to discover many kinds of plants and flowers. The reason why I have my base in Tokyo is because Tokyo has the best flower market in the world. If I need a certain flower from abroad I can always ask them and I can have it here in Japan. Of course they can't bring everything so on my trip to the Amazonas I did the artwork and took pictures over there. One of the artworks that I liked most are your flower sculptures

**Where does this fascination for combining flowers with materials like steel come from?**

Flowers and plants are very natural things. Since we as humans use that to create artwork, I really wanted to include something man-made in contrast. I feel like if I combine it with a man-made object, the flowers become even more beautiful. This combination really draws the attention to the beauty of nature and this is what I want to show.

**Do you still get surprised by flowers?**

I think it is impossible to get to know anywhere near all the flowers in the world. I met this guy when I was in Amazonas, he was 70 years old and had been studying flowers for 40 years and he said he only knows approximately 30% of the Amazonas plants. I was shocked! The wild plants in Amazonas really shocked me and surprised me a lot. I always try to explore new things that I don't know. This is very much my approach.





# Mustafah Abdulaziz

The award-winning photographer documenting the interaction between humans and our most important natural resource, Berlin.

Interview & Text: Alyse Archer-Coité  
Photography: Daniel Müller / Robbie Lawrence

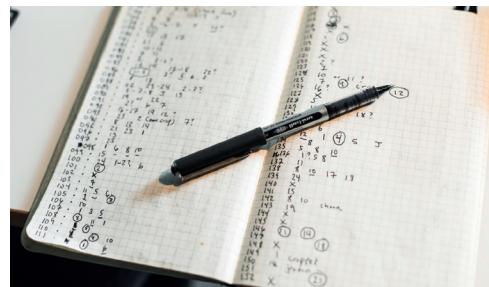
**Even if you do not know Mustafah Abdulaziz or his photographs, you already possess a necessarily intimate relationship with the subject of his monumental photo project, simply named Water.**

**The photographic project presents images and stories of our global water crisis across regions as diverse as Sierra Leone, the Yangtze River, and the brushlands of California. Though sometimes troubling or even demoralizing, the imagery is always breathtaking. It is a startling juxtaposition Mustafah embraces as a mechanism to help understand how we use and misuse our most vital resource.**



We caught up with the award-winning photographer in his Kreuzberg studio, where we spent the afternoon discussing the project he's called his "life's work": its challenges, its rewards, and its implications.

Mustafah is currently three years into what he predicts will be a ten-year endeavor, which even he acknowledges may not be enough time to capture a subject whose complexity lies in its being both vast and nuanced.



**You're from New York City. What was it like growing up in such a dynamic city, renowned for its capacity to mint creative individuals?**

My mother was studying to be a psychologist when I was growing up and was super supportive. She understood my need from a young age to go out on my own—I come from a big family, there are six of us—and explore the world through solitary experience. She would encourage all my random interests and flights of fancy. I remember the moment I discovered photography. I was in a bookstore and picked up Richard Avedon's *In the American West* and I had this astounding feeling, this compulsion to understand it. I wanted to know how it was made; I wanted to know about the space between the photographer and the subject. Is this a job? Does somebody pay you? I didn't know anyone I could ask, there were no photographers in our family, so my mom encouraged me to get out into the world and ask some questions...

#### **...and where did you go to get some answers?**

I went about it like an investigative journalist. I visited bookstore after bookstore, eventually left home at 17, drove south to Florida and west to California and I started taking crappy pictures.

I learned so much on that first trip. I learned about the technical parts of course, simple things like how to use a camera and all of its functions properly, but I also realized a large

part of taking photos is the response. How people respond to you, as the photographer, when you want to take their picture. It was like learning to speak a new language. So much of my early education was trial and error. If I wanted to do landscape photography, I would read every book I could find on the subject. I found out which museums were collecting it, which curators and galleries were exhibiting it. It was definitely slow-going and I was kind of hacking away in the dark. That was, is now, and will probably always be my method. The method is the madness.

#### **When you returned to NYC, what were you shooting?**

I came back to NYC and I started applying for internships and no one knew who the hell I was! (laughs) So a lot of doors were slammed in my face and a lot of them just never opened. My buddy Matt Craig at the Wall Street Journal gave me my first real assignment. It was the kind of assignment that meant other people might take a chance on me. I shot Barack Obama's inauguration. I was supposed to capture people in the crowd, to capture how they were feeling. I remember being in the WSJ office in DC, sleeping on the floor, and thinking, "I'm hooked."

I was and still am so proud to have been a part of such a momentous occasion. The sacrifice was some numb fingers: it was freezing sleeping on an office floor and drinking tons of bad coffee, but my name will forever live in the national archives along with the WSJ and that moment in history.



#### **Is that what prompted you to start work on "Water"?**

Yeah, it really just crystallized for me at that time. I asked myself, what am I willing to sacrifice to make my own work my own way? Turned out the sacrifice was financial security. (laughs)

That feeling of knowing there is a check in the mail was gone. I removed the temptation to do work that paid well but didn't make me feel well. At the risk of sounding cliché, I wanted to go back to that moment in the bookstore, when I first discovered that photo book. I had so many questions, and was so naive, that I was sure I could find all the answers...and now, I am presenting my best work in the best way I know how. It's work that focuses on the subjects I'm most passionate about.

I know now that in order to make someone else feel something, I have to feel it first. I have to have something to say. I'm not aiming for greatness for greatness' sake, but I made a commitment to myself to do work at this level and make a clean break from client work.

I sacrificed a lot of common comforts, rent

being one of them, and stopped letting my finances determine how I pursued my work. It was a challenge, and in a weird way, I really thrive off these types of challenges.

#### **What was the first step?**

I decided to spend one year researching, and I moved to Berlin, a city where I could enjoy low overhead, pay off some bills, and set myself up for what I knew would be a serious commitment. I went into this mad phase of tacking up images and research materials to the walls. It was very *True Detective*, except I didn't have a board, I had a whole apartment of images and text and plans. Anyone who came in off the street would have thought I was out of my mind. But of course, even some people who knew me were naysayers. You know, people would say, "Oh, I know another guy who is also doing a project on water..." or "How can you possibly do a project on water, and with so many countries? It's impossible."



**How many countries are in the project?**

32. It is vast, but I told myself I didn't need to make anyone else understand or believe that it was possible. I just needed to make sure that I understood and believed. Then, if I fail, I'll know it was due to my own inability, not because of self-doubt or outside influences. Not to get too esoteric, but for me, photography is deeply personal. It's about an inner truth made up of teachings from my own life experiences, compounded with the responsibility to try and do the best I can, knowing that photography is not about the hunt for truth, it can only take glimmers or reflections of it. You will always be looking at one side of a rotating moon. You can never really attempt to encapsulate the whole truth of a situation. The perspective, your truth, is just that, yours. I recognize that I am going to be in these situations in Pakistan, Brazil, or in China that are difficult emotionally, and sometimes physically. But if the common denominator in all these situations is my willingness to hold myself to a standard, that it has to be excellence and not bullshit, then that self-awareness is what carries the project through. I understand the cost of failure. I've failed enough times, when I was younger, when I didn't fully understand the cost of it, but those experiences are what make me see "Water" and say: It's entirely possible to do it, and if I'm lucky, to also change people's paradigms on the subject.

**"In order to make someone else feel something. I have to feel it first. I have to have something to**

**What sets this project apart from other photographer's work on the subject?**

People often make assumptions about the project, they say things like, "Oh, it's about water, so it must be about the water crisis," or "It's about energy and water, right?" or "Is it about recreation and water?" I explain that it's all of those things and none of those things. It's about something that has never before, in my opinion, existed. It's a modern compendium on our greatest human challenge. There is nothing more pure than that. Just like I am here, sitting across the table from you here, drinking a glass of water—there is someone on the other side of the world, doing the same thing, and we will suffer the consequences equally if we don't become caretakers of this resource. I mean, if I were to photograph a civil war or conflict areas, you might say, there are two sides to that conflict... but with water there is only one side. Without it, we will cease to exist. There are no other variables. There's a truth in that simplicity of message that I find reassuring.



Rancho Mirage, California, USA, 2015.

**Some of these regions are more remote and inhospitable than others. How do you get such intimate access to these communities?**

Of the 32 countries, Sierra Leone was first. I traveled the Ganges River. The experience of the place was such a powerful battery for the work I created. I need to feel the place I'm in, I need to be alone and work, just me and my backpack, just my film, my camera and maybe a book. I need to be in touch with the physicality of what I'm doing. I need to really be in it.

The reason the light looks the way it does in some of the Sierra Leone images is because I worked for it. I woke up at 4 am, I convinced a guy to take me on a boat down the river, from where he dropped me I trekked. I really sacrificed to get to that moment, and you can't take that away from the image. If I don't capture an image, the only person responsible is me. And in the next country, I do better.

**"All I can do is make my best work with the most integrity possible —that is where the humanity lies, that's the heart of it."**

**How do you relate to the subject matter? Do you consider yourself a conservationist, or an activist?**

Humanist is a good way to describe my interaction with the subject matter. The moment you take a picture, you still haven't done anything but press a button. You haven't

done anything for that person on the other side of the lens or bettered their situation.

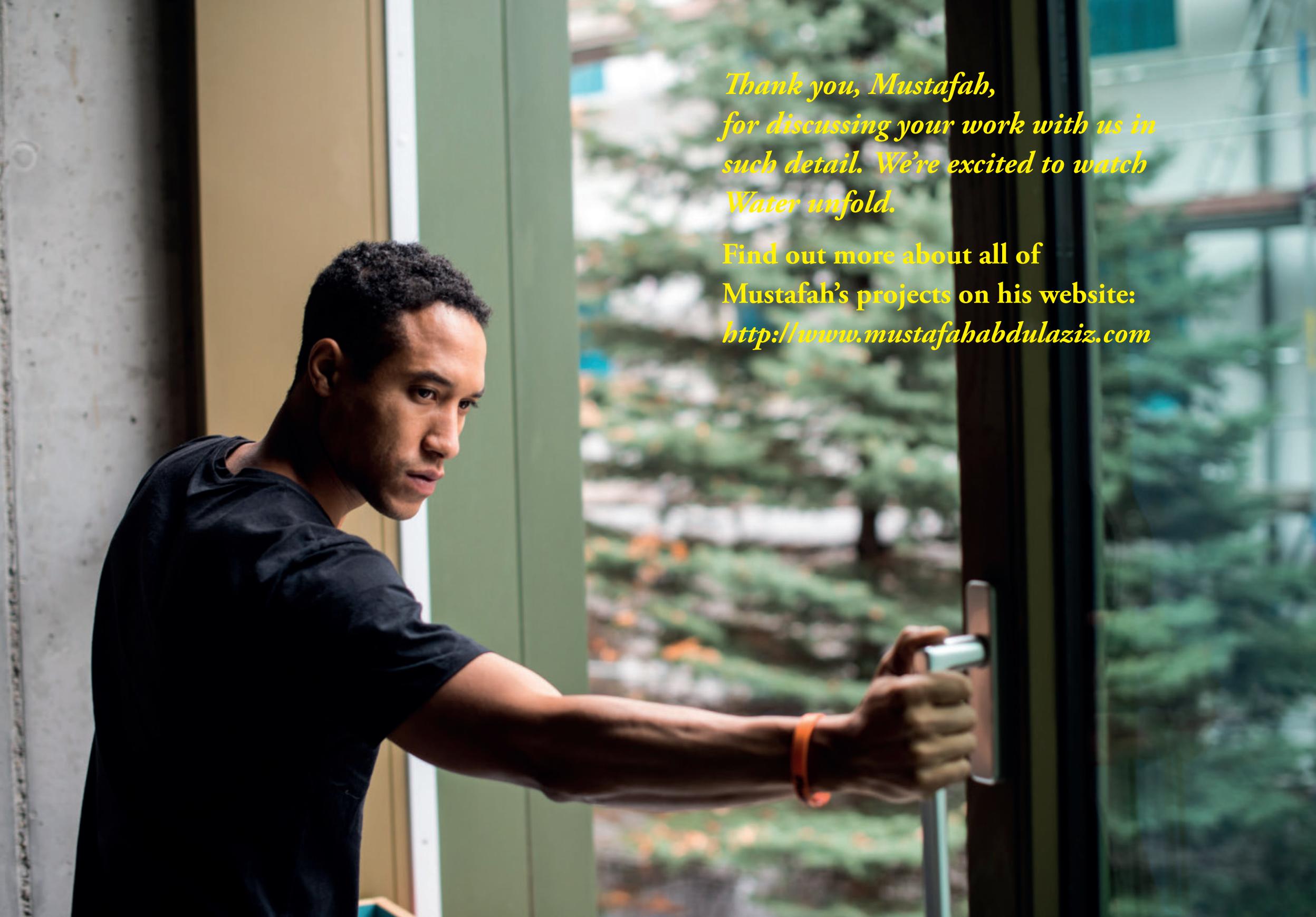
It happens sometimes, that you can influence change through the images, like the images out of Vietnam did for U.S. attitudes toward the war. Helping people is not my job as a photographer, I think it's my responsibility as a human being. But I can't see or be responsible for everyone's pain. All I can do is make my best work with the most integrity possible—that is where the humanity lies, that's the heart of it.



Funeral pyre of Ram Bhagat. Ganges River, Allahabad, India, 2013.



Children journey to collect water. Sindh Province, Pakistan, 2013.



*Thank you, Mustafah,  
for discussing your work with us in  
such detail. We're excited to watch  
Water unfold.*

Find out more about all of  
Mustafah's projects on his website:  
<http://www.mustafahabdulaziz.com>

# Flower caps

Floral caps for Kari Tapiiri,  
Sani and Taika.

Photos: Juho Huttunen







# Where the Mountains Meet the Sea: Gwen and Gawie Fagan on creating their dream house

Photography: Desmond Louw & Antonia Heil  
Interview & Text: Antonia Heil

Depending on where you stand, the Fagan's self-built home 'Die Es' has a mountain or seaside backdrop. 'Die Es'—meaning 'the hearth—is situated on the Atlantic Seaboard in Camps Bay, but it feels more like it's on a little farm with its own private nature reserve.

The house itself and most things in it are handmade by couple Gwen and Gawie, their son and three daughters. Today it's just the two of them living here. It's a magical place with magical people who have lived long and full lives.

Sitting around a table with Gwen and Gawie drinking a hot cup of Rooibos tea, we listen to a collection of stories experienced over almost a century.

They speak about a career spanning almost 70 years, hard work and successes, and 65 years of marriage and family life.

As one of South Africa's most celebrated architects, Gawie's ideas concerning connecting architecture with the natural landscape were revolutionary.

Over the years, Gwen played an instrumental role as a historical researcher and landscape planner in Gawie's practice. Together they share a love of designing new buildings just as much as restoring old ones.



Nothing distinguishes the celebrated architecture of the Fagan's more than their own cherished home, Cape Town.



**What is your regular routine?**

**Gwen:** We start at 8.30am. We've got very nice people working for us, all of them are talented and very friendly. We do a lot of interesting and varied work. Some restorations combined with new stuff. At the moment we are working on quite a large clinic in Beaufort West. We're also doing a new building right next to our office that has 18 stories and a number of restoration things like a student hostel. We are very busy. We can't keep up with work actually.

**Gawie:** We are altogether ten people. I can manage that. I've got personal input in each job.

**Gwen:** Now that I'm older I don't like cooking that much. For lunch we go to the Royal Cape Yacht Club and we have a decent meal there. That means I don't cook in the evenings, we just have a light meal, fruit or something like that. Our office staff go at five but we often work much later than that in order to catch up on the day's work. Then we come home and that's it. Gawie enjoys reading the paper. He reads everything and picks up all the mistakes and makes little circles around them. I like to read all kinds of books. Then we look at the evening news and watch an interesting program. We usually go to bed at about 10.30pm. Next day, same



thing. On the weekends we see our children. On a Sunday I often cook and they all come here. We take the weekends off.

**Gawie, you have had a major influence on South African architecture. How did everything start for you?**

**Gawie:** I was employed by the bank Volkskas as an architect on a salary basis.

**Gwen:** At that time Volkskas was starting to build small Afrikaans banks all over the country. Gawie designed 50 banks from scratch in 10 years.

**Gwen, how did you get started professionally?**

**Gwen:** I was qualified as a doctor and worked full-time in the military hospital in Pretoria while we were farming and while Gawie was working for Volkskas.

**How did you manage with the kids?**

**Gwen:** I never left them at home, I dragged them

around where I went and when they were big enough I put them into nursery schools and when they were bigger, they went to school, of course. We became very interested in farming. We started keeping cows and we got more and more until we were milking 18 cows a day. We used to get up very early to be able to milk.

**Was Gawie ever at home?**

**Gwen:** He had to be. Gawie got an airplane because he couldn't keep up with the work in a car.

**Gawie:** I had to do an enormous amount of traveling. Eventually we had almost 200 branches across the country and the bank sometimes had these big American cars. Very often they didn't have a car available so they asked us to use our

private cars for which they paid nine pennies a car mile. I found I was half the week away from home so I said to the general manager that I'd like to get a plane and he was very amused by that.

**Gwen:** Gawie got a pilot license as a student.

**Gawie:** I was quite an experienced pilot by then. The manager had a good laugh and said "forget it". He thought it was a big joke. I said "alright, I'll buy the plane, you lend me the money for the plane and you pay me nine pennies a car mile for the use of the plane." The plane paid for itself in about four years. It was a very nice plane, a Tri-Pacer, a workhorse plane.

**You have an amazing knowledge and a brilliant understanding of material. What does a typical Fagan-building look like?**

**Gwen:** I would say that Gawie's work is highly inventive. He never copies anybody else and it's inspirational. Like this house that we built ourselves. We bought the plot. Gawie was

sitting in an airplane when he got the idea about how the house should look. He didn't have paper with him at the time and the guy next to him had a cigarette box, so he drew the house on that cigarette box. If we wanted to scale anything when working on the house we referred to that first drawing. For instance, we didn't know how tall to make the fireplace and went back to the cigarette box drawing to scale it accordingly!

We still have a photograph of that sketch. I think Gawie is pretty much inspired by the local architecture and has given many lectures on what moves and inspires him and what he finds beautiful.

**In 1964 you started building your house 'Die Es'. What made you move to Camps Bay?**

**Gwen:** We had friends living on the plot next door. It was an open plot and they said "Come buy this plot." There

weren't many open plots like this. This one has a nature reserve on its boundaries that runs right down to the sea.

**Gawie:** Nobody can ever build in front of us.

**Gwen:** We decided to buy. It worked out well for us.



**You built the house while working full-time and finished it in two years.**

**How did you do this?**

**Gwen:** I used to work in the mornings at Carl Bremer hospital. In the afternoons the kids came from school and then we started working. We also built on weekends. I think people thought we were mad.

**Gwen, I heard you collect plants.**

**Gwen:** My roses are my biggest collection. I became a very ardent collector of heritage roses. I found that Tuinhuis, a government house in Cape Town, had roses in the garden from the early 1800s and we were asked to restore the Tuinhuis and its garden. I'm always responsible for the landscape part of our work. I started my research on old roses and how they got to the Cape, where they came from, where they were planted and how they were treated. It became a passion. In the end I decided to publish a book on my findings.

**How many years of research did this take?**

**Gwen:** About eight years. I published the book in 1988. We finished the restoration of the Tuinhuis garden in 1974. I asked Gawie to take photos for the illustrations as he is a very good photographer. You can see that the book has been designed to be published in full size so readers see the exact size of the roses.

**Gawie:** That determined the size of the book. That's why we had to do our own publishing.

**Gwen:** Yeah, publishers wouldn't do a book as big as this. So we had to do it ourselves. So we sold some of our shares and started our own publishing business.

**Gawie:** We tried every publishing house and a publisher said years afterwards to me: "You know the biggest mistake that I've ever made was to refuse to publish your book."

**Gwen:** After work we used to drive around on a motorbike. I knew where these roses grew by that time because of all my research.

**Gwen, you have a wealth of gardening knowledge – what was the trigger for your interest in landscaping?**

**Gwen:** As a little girl I grew up on a farm in Morreesburg in the Karoo and we were very much involved in day-to-day work on the farm. My mother was an Afrikaans farm girl. She was called Nauti. She wasn't called that for nothing. My mother's family was very conscious of leading a good life and doing good things for other people and belonging to the church. My mother was a very good singer. She studied singing in Stellenbosch and then she went to Upington to teach there. She was going to go to London. In the meantime she went to Upington to teach and she met a man there who she wanted to marry. He had already married once and had a child. She said to her father that she wanted to get married and he said: "You can't marry this man. He father said, "okay but the condition is that you go to London and he stays here and you get your qualifications and then come back and get married." That's what happened. She came back, got married and they had me.

They used to have concerts all over Natal in small towns. One week he went away to arrange a concert tour, he didn't come back and she didn't know what had happened to him. She heard from her friends that he'd be going out with another woman and the next thing she heard was that he had left the country with all her money. Her brother heard about this and said: "you come back home at once to the family farm and we'll talk to you." So she came back and he said to her, "you are a sinful woman. Therefore you cannot raise this child. I will raise her until she's eight and then you can take her." That's what happened. So I went to live with him and when I was eight I went to Stellenbosch. I asked the shopkeeper to give me an area in the backyard and I started making a garden. This was my first interest in gardening.



**How did the two of you meet?**

**Gwen:** My mother died of cancer when I was 18 and then I came to Cape Town, and started my second year at university. That's when I met Grawie.

**What made you and Grawie start working together?**

**Gwen:** An earthquake. In 1969 there was a bad earthquake in the Western Cape and Grawie was on the Institute of Architects committee and they sent him with a couple of other people to assess what harm had been done to important buildings in the area. That's what he did and then he decided that the best thing would be to spend all the money that he had been given on this project on one town. That was Tulbagh. We wrote a book about that restoration. I was employed to work on this project with him. Also when he couldn't go out to Tulbagh to take notes on site, I did that for him and that's when I came into the office. He found I was quite useful and so I stayed there, and I'm still there! I work on the landscaping and interiors. I help with all the research. So whenever there is a historical building we're working on, I do the background history. I decided to specialize further and in 1995 I got my PhD in Landscape Design. That meant that I could have a little more authority. The subject of my thesis was the influence of landscapes from all over the world on our own landscape.

**Do you enjoy working together?**

**Grawie:** I think it's very nice.

**Gwen:** We fight sometimes. We work together. We push it.

**You have a career of almost 70 years. What building are you most proud of?**

**Gwen:** Your mother's house.

**Grawie:** Yeah.

**Gwen:** Grawie built that house when he was a student and still last year it was chosen as the house of the year. He did that in 1951. But you know, once you've finished one thing you forget about it and carry on with the next one. You don't dwell on what you've done. Your mind is focused on what you have to do next.

**I've heard you were also involved in the castle in Cape Town.**

**Gwen:** For 32 years. We didn't maintain it while we were restoring. By the time we finished, it needed maintenance. Now we've been appointed to maintain it.

**Grawie:** It's the most interesting building.

**Gwen:** It's the oldest building in South Africa.

**I know it's a silly question, but I'm going to ask it anyways. Do you ever think of retiring?**

**Gwen:** No. Unless we get so sick that we can't work anymore. Why should one stop doing what you enjoy doing?

**Grawie:** Gwen, I think we did decide that at 100 years old we'll consider it.

**Do your children nag you to work less?**

**Gwen:** No, they know what we enjoy. They are right behind us. In fact the children are exactly the same as we are. They're all very talented and very hard working in whatever they do.

**Grawie:** I sold my son the building next to ours.

**Gwen:** He's a structural engineer and we do a lot of work with him. It's nice, we understand each other. We think the same way.



**“Well, having built this place ourselves, we feel very much a part of it.”**

**Do you relate with people your age or do you surround yourself with younger people mainly?**

**Grawie:** Yes and yes.

**Gwen:** There are people we associate with that we have been friends for a long time that haven't died yet.

**Grawie:** I am serious. Most of our friends have died in the last five years.

**What do you do to stay so young?**

**Gwen:** We're just lucky.

**Do you collect anything next to roses?**

**Gwen:** I'm a collector of succulents and I've got a very wonderful collection of rose books as you can see.

**Grawie:** Architectural books.

**Gwen:** I also collect lithops, stone plants, they're all in the kitchen. They break up in the middle and a flower comes out. They're also called 'baby bottoms' – you can see why. I started collecting these when I was a little girl. I never walk out of a nursery with at least one plant. But I only collect things that I can use, I don't collect things that are just pretty. I'm also a bit of a pottery-collector as you can see. I love the work of Esias Bosch.

*Gawie and Gwen, thank you for meeting with us once again to revisit your beautiful home. It was an honor to meet you both.*

Find all books written and published by Gwen and Gawie Fagan in <http://www.breestraatpublikasies.co.za> Our video was filmed in partnership with AD Awards, Germany. Gwen and Gawie won their 2016 award for best self-designed space. For more information, see: <http://www.freundevonfreunden.com>.



A photograph of a bright living room. Large windows with white frames and cream-colored curtains let in natural light. A wooden chair with a white cushion sits in front of the window. Several large potted plants, including a palm tree and a monstera, are visible in the foreground and on the right side. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

# Designing his own method: The graphic world of Barcelona's Teddy Iborra Wicksteed

Text: Naila Tahub Nivadella  
Photography: Salva Lopez

**Teddy Iborra Wicksteed was born and raised in Barcelona, where he still lives today, to a Spanish father and English mother. Teddy is an animated person, constantly expanding on ideas when he talks, always up for a good conversation and has purposefully mastered several disciplines from photography to graphic design to editing.**

These skills perfectly complement each other in his daily work as art director of METAL magazine. As a student, Teddy started working for Folch Studio, a design agency in Barcelona, and for Apartamento Magazine. It was there that he developed design and branding editorial projects for independent magazines, books, and album covers. His work also includes a few special projects, such as Tono Volumen (a study of tone and volumetrics, an exercise in light of the corporal) Barcelona, 2014. Despite the various creative mediums at his disposal, Teddy's priority is photography.

The young photographer shares a space with the family business, the Iborra Restaurants, in a modernist building in the center of Barcelona. The interior space, constructed with classic lines, contrasts with the original colourfully tiled floors. Although he spends little time in the studio and says that he can spend the whole day "running around town", it's evident that he keeps his things carefully organized, and that he uses the space to find moments of calm. Teddy showed us around his house with its plant studded terrace, and opened the doors to his studio, in a building on the illustrious street of *Passeig de Gracia* in Barcelona.



**What's life like for you in Barcelona?**

Truly, the gastronomy is one of the best things about Barcelona. There is a lot of competition, and because of this the quality is actually really high, which makes me feel proud. I am a huge fan of the chef, Carme Ruscalleda—in fact, by coincidence I took photos of her for a magazine. The food is fantastic in her restaurant. I love the fact that she puts emphasis on products from this region, and doesn't wander off too much with weird dishes. I think that, like anyone, I always enjoy anything which is slightly austere.

**Despite these austere tastes you have a rather colorful and interdisciplinary career.****Was that a deliberate decision?**

No, it's super organic. I realized early on, in the third or fourth year of my career, that graphic design is not a business. I loved graphic design, but I didn't get on very well with technology. I couldn't get into using Dreamweaver or Flash, because I didn't really like them. The term "graphic design" I don't like whatsoever, because it doesn't make sense: everything is design and everything is graphic. Paul Rand said, 'In reality, design is art and visual communication.' Pure composition. Everything evolved in an organic way, but I realised that graphic design was a brilliant tool to express or communicate anything visually.

**So, you went to editing from graphic design. How would you say this came about?**

The last year of my studies I spent in Zurich; I learned a lot there. I was coming back to Barcelona, and through a photographer named Nacho Alegre I joined Folch Studio. They called me in for a trial, and before I graduated I was already working there. I hadn't even turned in my final project yet. Everything was rolling along nicely and I concentrated on art books and magazines.

**And photography, how did you get into that?**

So, as to be expected, what happens to every designer working in a studio and giving everything of themselves artistically in exchange for financial compensation, is that you get to a moment where you think, 'My god, I'm putting all my soul into these projects.' Obviously I learned a lot from Albert and Omar, a huge amount, and I am so grateful—but of course, when you begin to take on more work, there is a moment in which you think it's time for me.

I've always had a camera in my hand; in Folch Studio I was already taking little photographs for my portfolio and photos of the open booklets to put on the website. And sometimes, when there was a project with a low budget, I would get the studio's camera and take the photos myself, so that's how I started off. Then I went to study at the IEFC because I was really attracted to the idea of black and white, printing, and the enlarger. And—wow—I learned a lot there. I was totally captivated by the darkroom, because when you begin to see the compositions and what you can do with the camera—really, using a camera is like playing the guitar—that's when it really becomes cool to take photos instinctively, because you already know the result before shooting. You can see the knowledge you've accumulated.

**Regarding art direction, how much would you say is "art" and how much is strategy?**

In reality I am very rational about this. That is, when I worked at other studios I remember that we gave endless presentations in PDF format to clients when trying to sell a book. However, with Omar Sosa—who I was also working with for two years for brands such as Flos—we realised that we had to take along stuff that was already nearly finished. For example, I never even took my laptop to meetings at Metal Magazine, instead, I brought a printed magazine—without putting the cart before the horse, bringing all your ideas directly in print form. In the end, this avoids a lot of problems, it means that the client can see the product before you start. So if you're asking me whether it's a matter of strategy... It can be.

**What short term and medium term professional challenges do you have?**

I'm going to be honest with you about this: I haven't got to where I am through fear. That is, when I was little I had lots of problems at school, I found it really hard. The teachers began to make comments to my mother, telling me to stop studying, do something else or work in the restaurants. And I believed it. At first, I actually went to study exactly that—hospitality. I never dared to dream that I could take photos. I never dreamed that I could create a book, or that I could take photography because 'that wasn't me.' However, since I was young I had clearly shown a special sensitivity towards this. I mean, at school my notes were like a party on the page, it was obvious I already had a special writing style, and there were certain structural things—but no teachers had noticed. Don't get me wrong, no one ever said that I was stupid, but it's true that they said I was unfocused.

So, if you're asking me where I saw myself going, I'm going to have to answer honestly

and say that in reality, I never imagined I would get to where I am now. Much more than that, I'm delighted, I couldn't be happier. What more can you ask for than to go somewhere and have someone tell you, 'Wow! Your photos are beautiful!' This means that: people are looking at my work, they appreciate it; and on top of that they are doing it on a regular basis, because they know what my most recent piece of work is. For me, that is a compliment.

**In your photographic work one can see a strong sense of beauty. Does this aesthetic vision influence your daily life?**

Things that are badly thought out or ugly annoy me... But that's the eternal debate.

I remember a wonderful professor that I had in Zurich who made us define what was good, bad, ugly and beautiful, and all the combinations in between. As in, tell me what is both beautiful and bad, give me something which is ugly and good, something which is ugly and bad. When you are forced to define these things it's really difficult, and it ends up becoming a criticism of oneself. That's to say, yes, everyone chooses one pair of trousers or another, one pair of shoes or another, everybody has a very, very aesthetically oriented vision... But yes, it's true that I have a stricter filter. I never dreamed that I could create a book.





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**You’re talking about the satisfaction of being acknowledged, no?**

Yes, yes, but either way, a long time ago, back when I had yet to publish a photo, a friend of mine told me a beautiful thing: ‘I really like your photos.’ And I said to him, ‘Yeah, but... man, I see yours and I’m so impressed.’ The two of us were really drunk, so he told me, ‘But don’t worry about that, because it’s like writing a book—you’re writing, you’re writing, you’re reading it over, you’re correcting it, and if finally, someone reads it, amazing... but if not, well you’ve got a book, no?!’

Despite this, I’ve spent a large part of my life feeling restricted, thinking that I couldn’t do photography.

**It’s good to break the barriers which you impose on yourself.**

Yes, yes, and I have to say that my girlfriend, Mónica Zafra, has helped me a huge amount. She is a stylist with skills far superior to mine in photography, and she told me, ‘No, no. Your photos are great, and you have to go for it.’ And now I get to a session with the comfort of thinking, ‘Wow, this is all mine!’

Your photographic portraits are characterized by having clean lines and sharp features that give your figures an almost sculptural plasticity, toying with classical beauty. There is something that is contemporary, but at the same time very timeless. What is behind this aesthetic?

Photography is, in a way, the direct translation of what your eyes want to see, and the camera is my tool to filter this. Just like when a person is in love. It can be absolute fucking bullshit, but when a person is in love they idealize the person in such a way that, in reality, the mental image is... surreal, it's nothing like reality. So what you see in your head stays in your head, and the camera is a type of intermediary tool for you to demonstrate a little bit of what you're seeing directly inside your head. Well, try to. A way to take you there. So yes, I'm a timeless or classic guy in the sense that I like people to look beautiful [in photographs], with profiles that I think are like those I want to see.

In your photographic work one can see a strong sense of beauty. Does this aesthetic vision influence your daily life?

Things that are badly thought out or ugly annoy me... But that's the eternal debate. I remember a wonderful professor that I had in Zurich who made us define what was good, bad, ugly and beautiful, and all the combinations in between. As in, tell me what is both beautiful and bad, give me something which is ugly and good, something which is ugly and bad. When you are forced to define these things it's really difficult, and it ends up becoming a criticism of oneself. That's to say, yes, everyone chooses one pair of trousers or another, one pair of shoes or another, everybody has a very, very aesthetically oriented vision... But yes, it's true that I have a stricter filter.

Thank you Teddy,  
for your generosity in sharing your  
ideas, knowledge and experiences.  
Thank you for opening the doors to  
your home and your studio, and for  
giving up your time to talk to us.



A photograph of two people, Alberto Arango and Ramiro Guerrero, standing outdoors. They are holding a large, lush floral arrangement filled with white lilies and yellow flowers. The man, on the right, has a beard and is wearing a dark t-shirt. The woman, on the left, is wearing sunglasses and a dark t-shirt. They are positioned in front of a building with a window featuring a decorative metal grid and a wall covered in green ivy.

# A Floral Calling: Alberto Arango & Ramiro Guerrero

Turning a passion into a profession, and making art with flowers, Mexico City

Photography: Pia Riverola  
Interview: Enrique Giner de los Rios  
Text: Shoko Wanger

**Eight years ago, Alberto Arango and Ramiro Guerrero knew nothing about flowers, except that they adored them.**

“At the time, we’d never even been to Mercado de Jamaica,” says Alberto, referring to Mexico City’s sprawling public market, famous for its vast selection of flowers. “But we were anxious to begin.”

“Flowers were calling us,” Ramiro adds. “But we had no idea whether our project would take off or crash.”

The couple have lived together for 11 years. Over the course of that time, each has experimented with a variety of creative undertakings—theater, photography, drawing, architecture—but Flores Cosmos, conceived during a fateful visit to Barcelona, was the only one that stuck. “Upon returning from Spain, we moved into a friend’s a house just a block away from where we live now,” says Ramiro. “We had no idea where or how we would survive. All we had were our credit cards.”



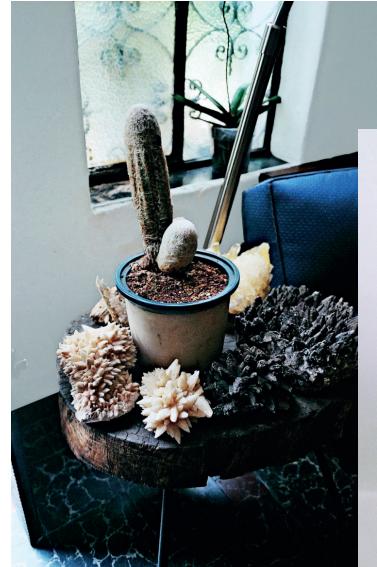
Now, nearly a decade later, their house and workshop are one next to the other, part of a peaceful and well-kept 1950s vecindad. When the pair leave in the morning, they’re met with the sounds of traffic and the polluted air beyond their door, but inside, they’ve created a veritable oasis, filled with books, art, music, and the joyful meanderings of their beloved rescued dogs, Kodama and Peluchina. (Tending to the city’s strays is another of the couple’s passions.)

For better or for worse, the house also serves as a retreat from the couple’s less tolerant fellow city dwellers. “Some people in the neighborhood have a peculiar attitude toward us,” says Alberto. “They pretend that we are cousins, brothers or close friends, and very few accept that we are married. I tell them openly that I’m his husband and I enjoy seeing the different reactions.”



But for the two, who were married shortly after gay marriage was made legal in Mexico City, the choice to stay—and to forge ahead in their pursuit to add to its beauty—is an easy one.

Says Ramiro, “Although I’ve always had a love-hate relationship with this city, love always wins in the end.”



## In next issue:



### Tokyo exhibition

Images for Flora & Laura Tokyo exhibition.



Photos: Osma Harvilahti